



BERLIN BRANDENBURG ACADEMY  
OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



# Book cultures of the Silk Road in Turfan

**Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst**

TURFANFORSCHUNG / TURFAN STUDIES

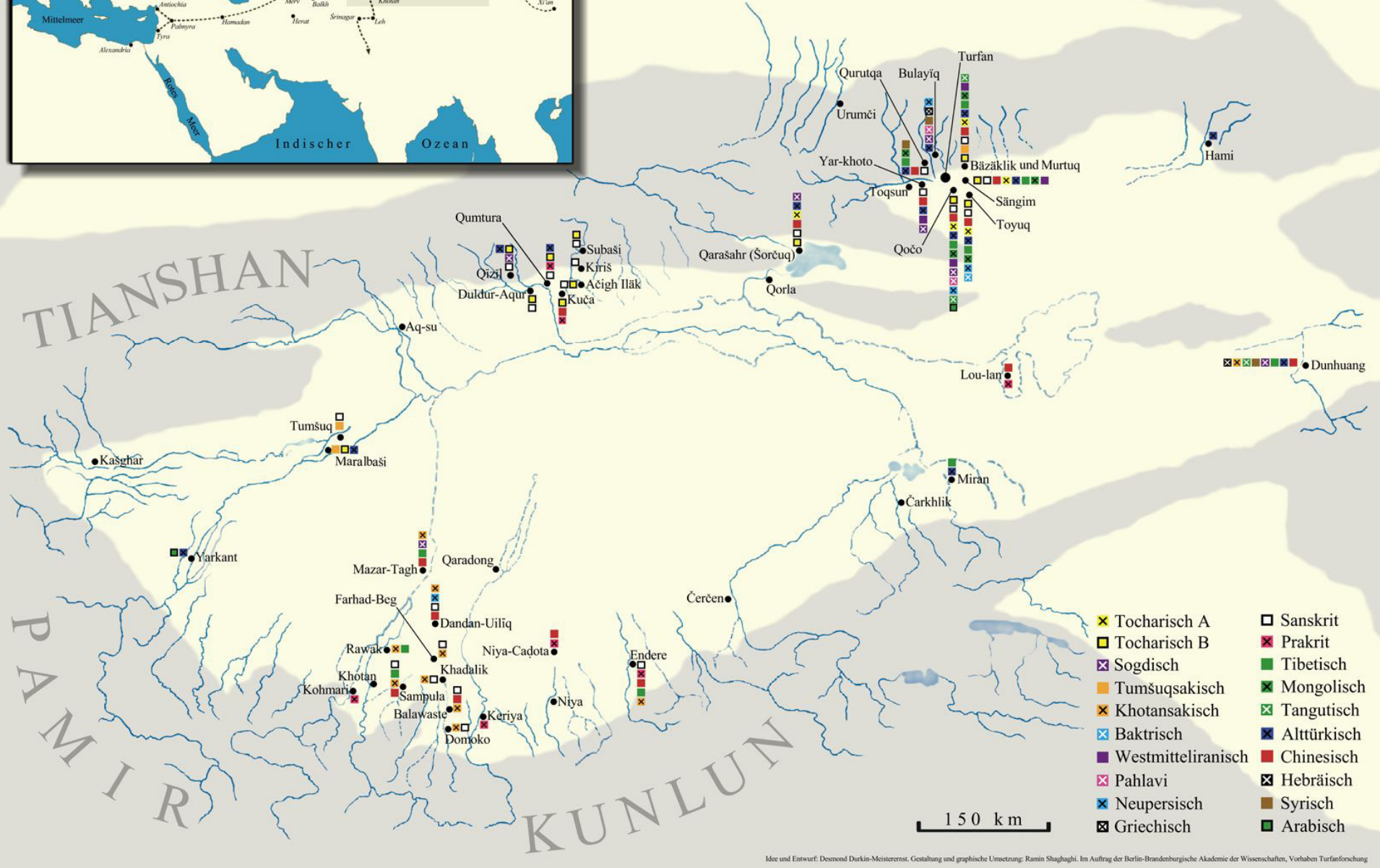


## Turfan Collection

The Turfan Collection is held by the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and is maintained by the State Library, Berlin, Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, in cooperation with the Academy, in the care of the Turfanforschung (Turfan Study Group).

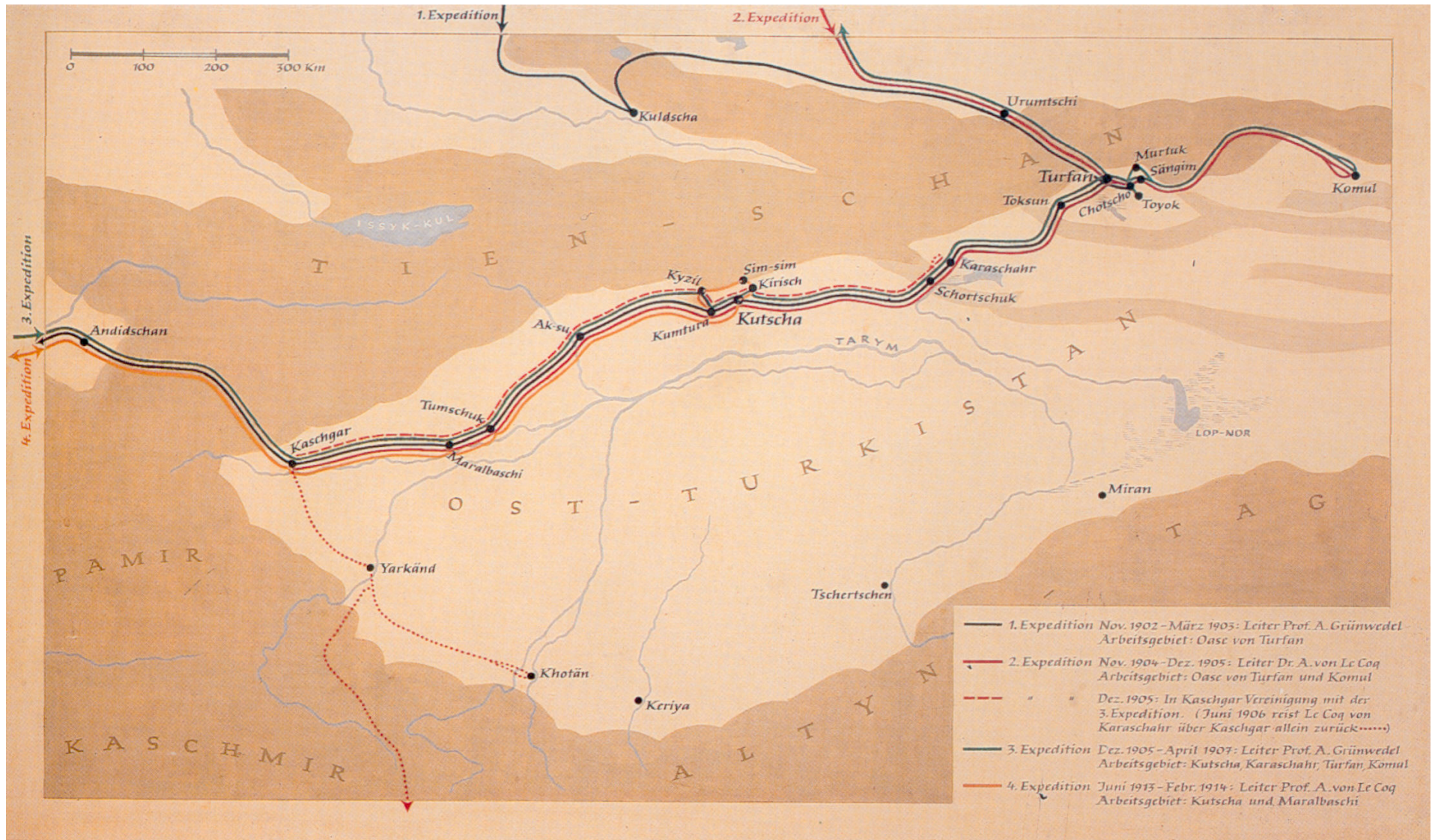
Some more texts are in the Museum for Asiatic Art, Berlin, Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, together with their collection of wall-paintings and other objects.

# The languages of the texts found in Central Asia



Idee und Entwurf: Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst. Gestaltung und graphische Umsetzung: Ramin Shaghghi. Im Auftrag der Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorhaben Turfanforschung

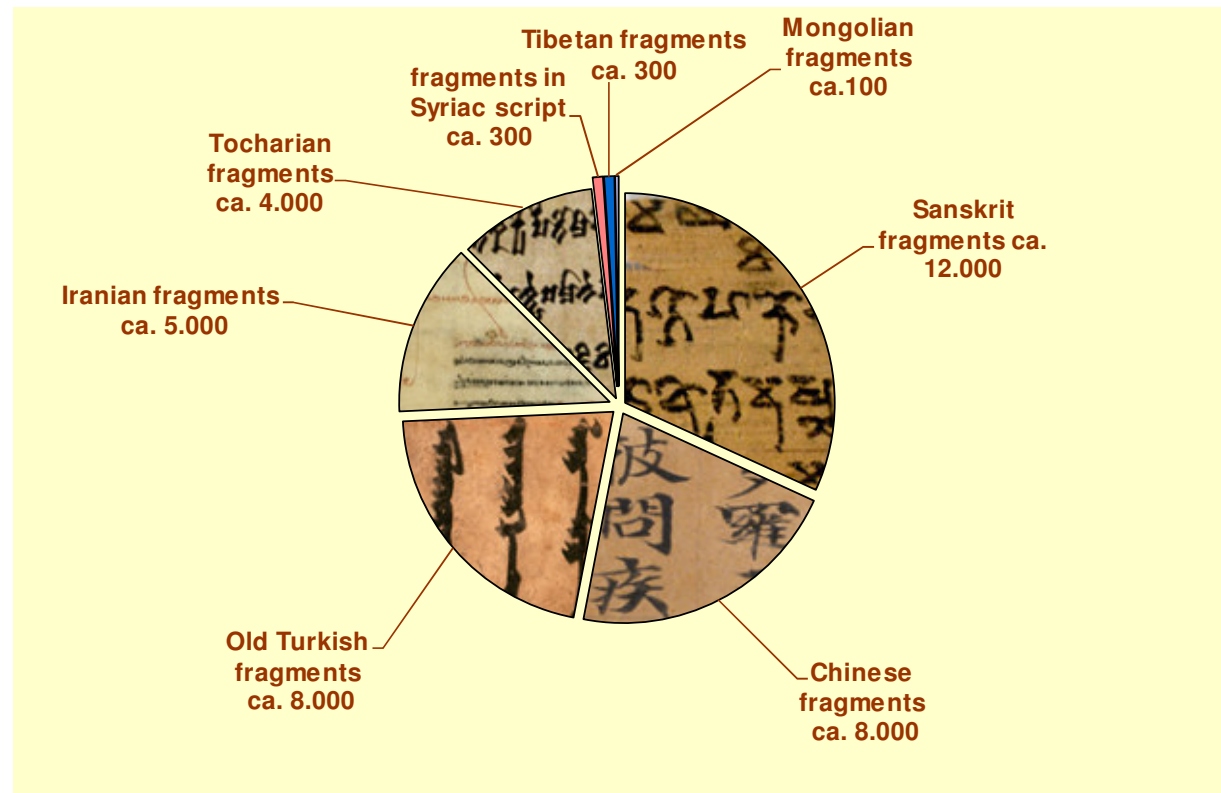
# Four German Turfan expeditions 1902-1914



# Languages of the texts in the Berlin Turfan Collection

## Ca. 40.000 fragments

- ca. 12.000 Sanskrit
- ca. 8.000 Chinese  
(of which ca. 2.000 Chinese/Uigur)
- ca. 8.000 Old Turkish (Uigur)
- ca. 5.000 Middle Iranian
- ca. 4.000 Tocharian
- ca. 300 Syriac
- ca. 300 Tibetan
- ca. 100 Mongolian



# Languages of the texts in Turfan

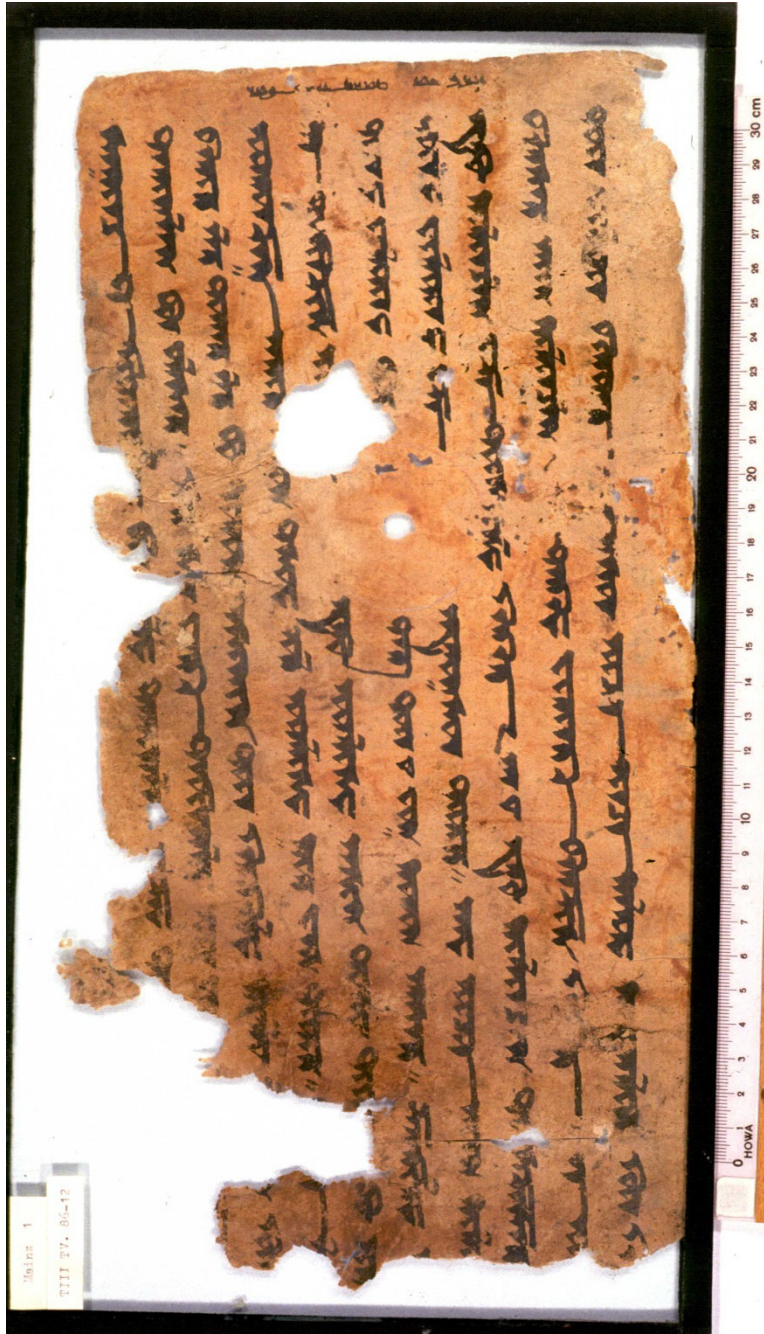
## *local languages:*

Tocharian  
Uigur (Old Turkish)

## *supraregional languages:*

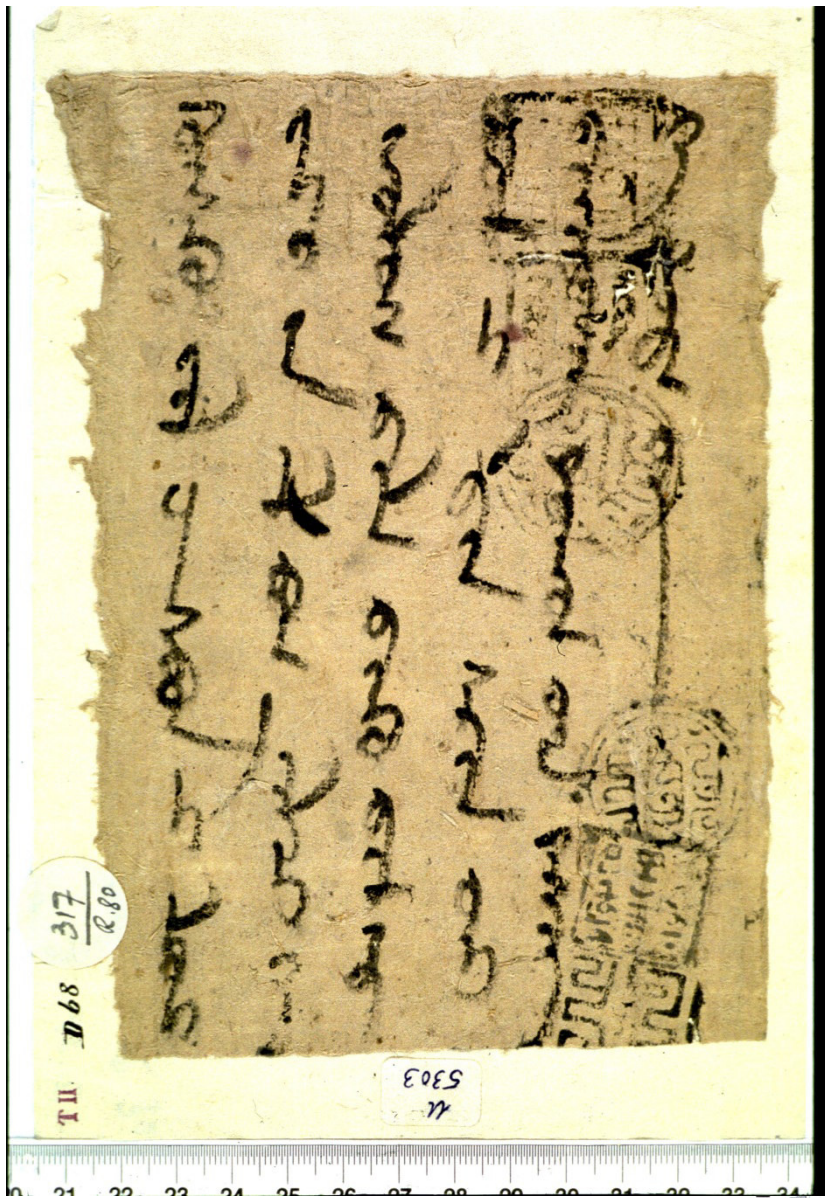
Chinese  
Sanskrit  
Sogdian  
Middle Persian  
Parthian  
etc.

# Old Turkish: Buddhist texts

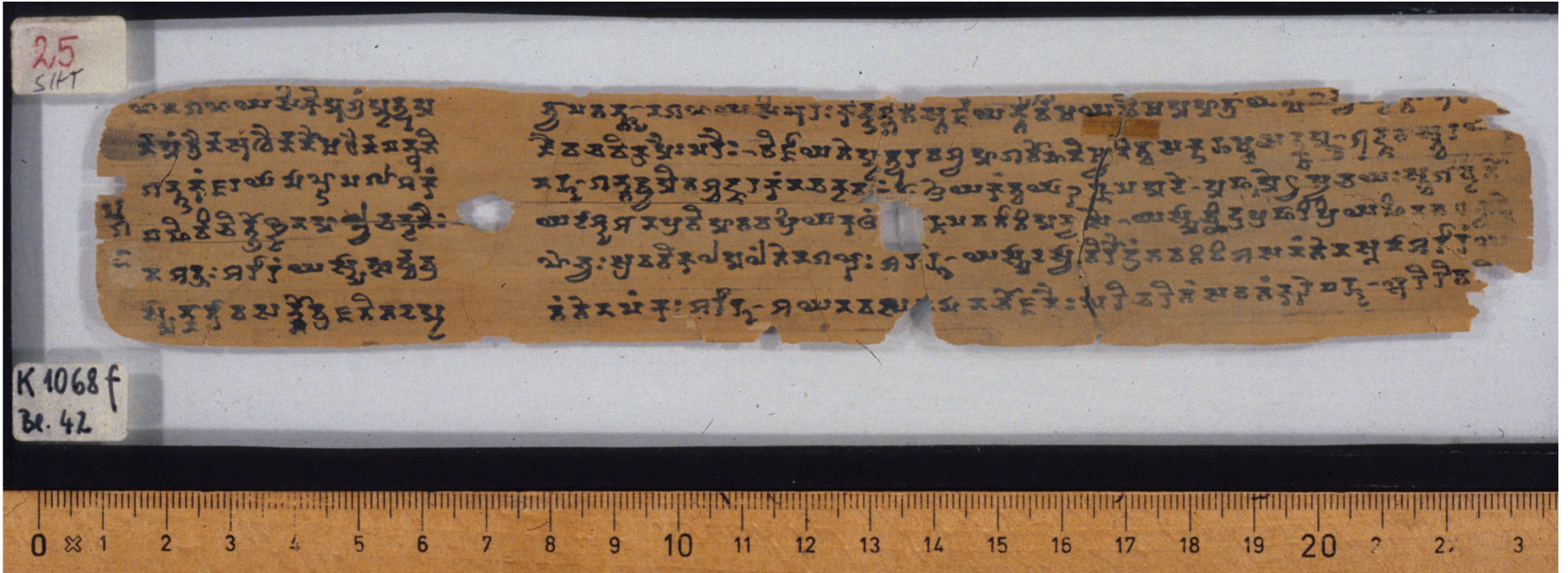




Old Turkish:  
A legal document  
and a text in Runic  
script



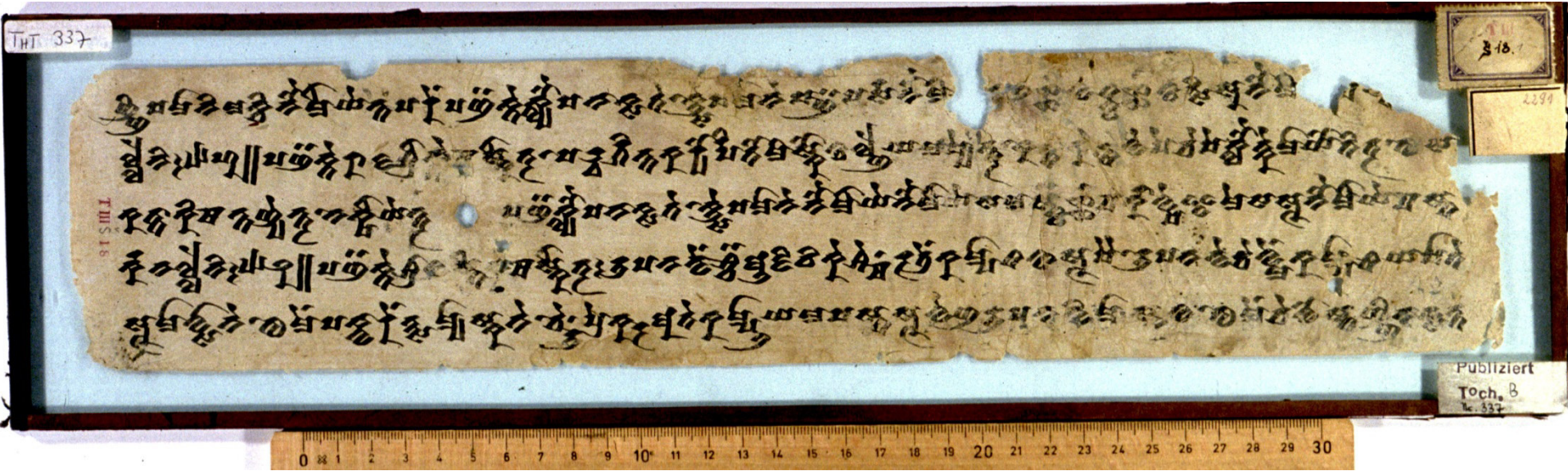
# Sanskrit



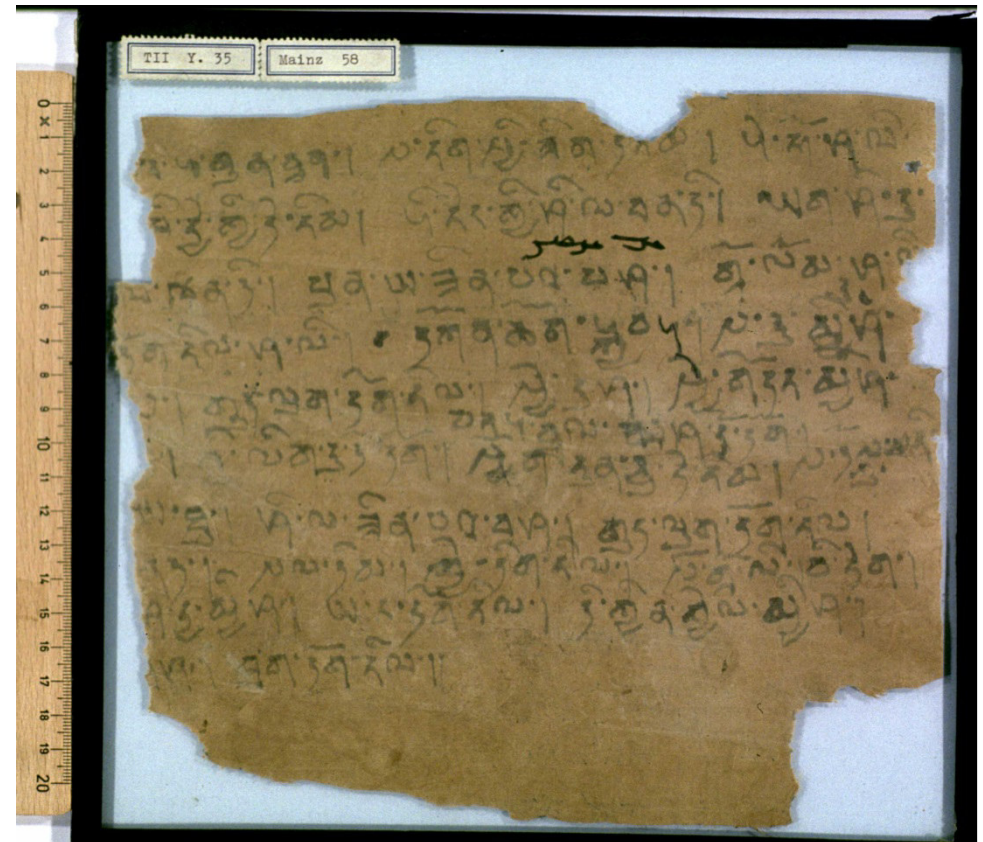
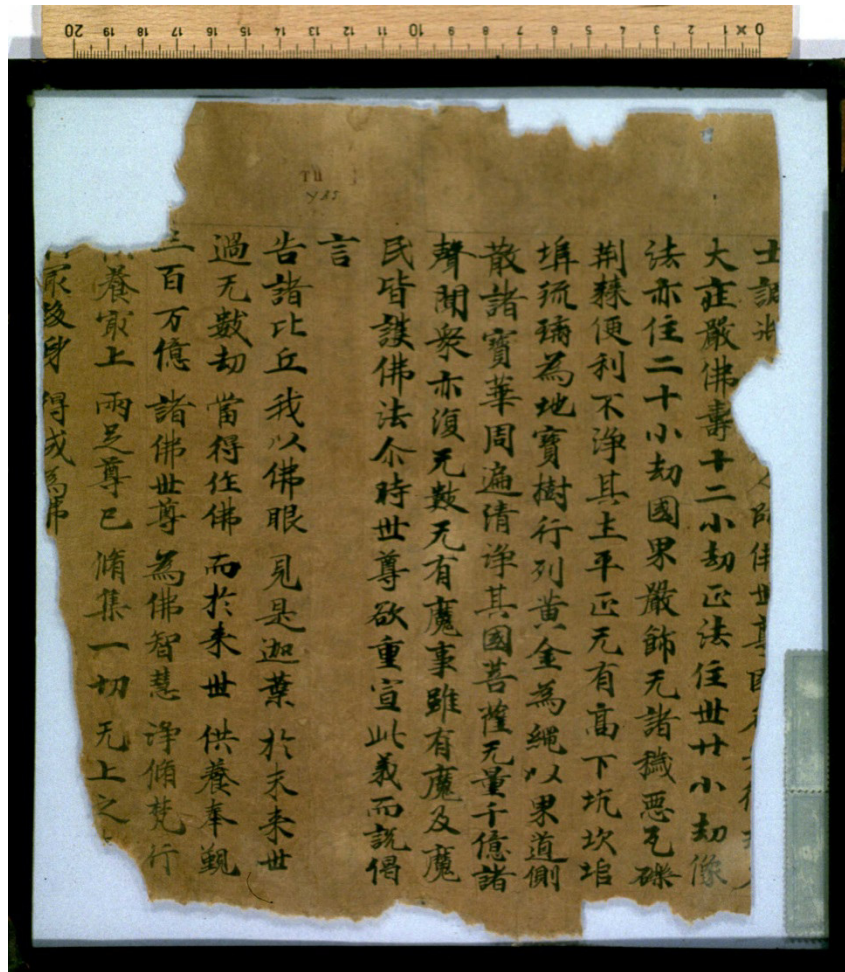
25  
SIHT

K 1068 f  
Bl. 42

# Tocharian

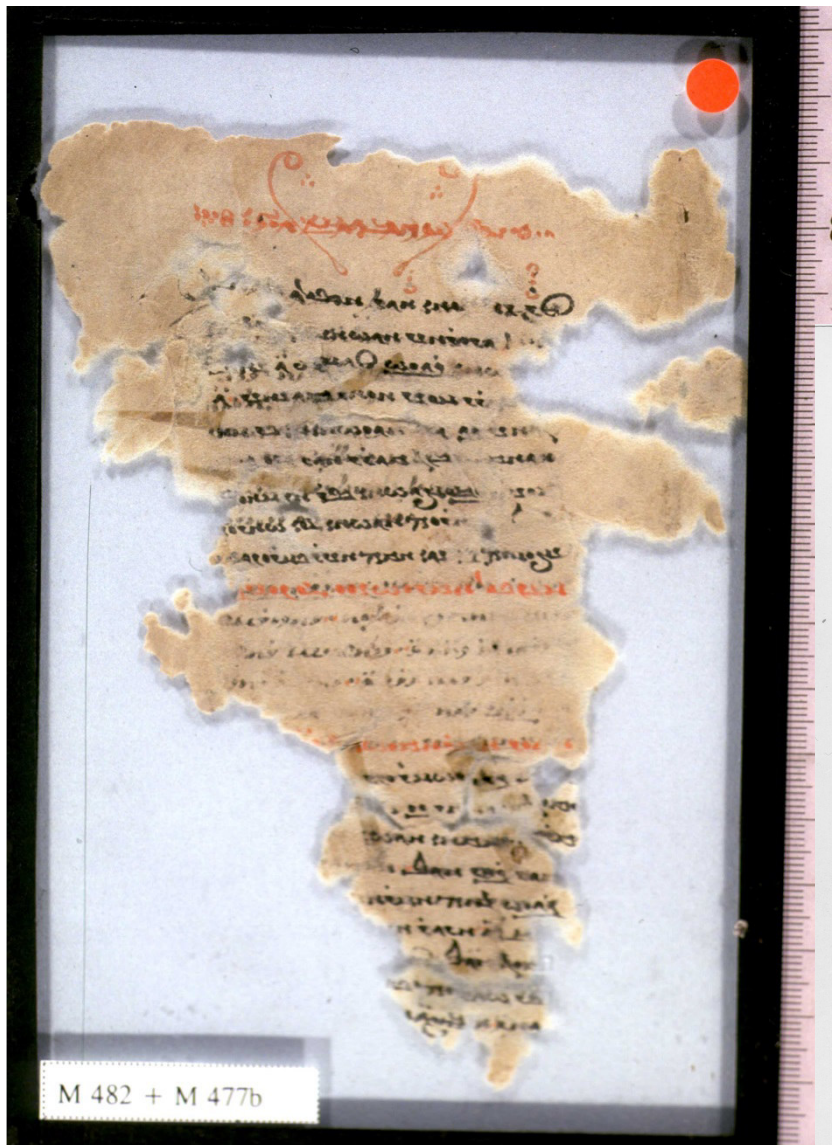


# Chinese ... and re-used for Tibetan

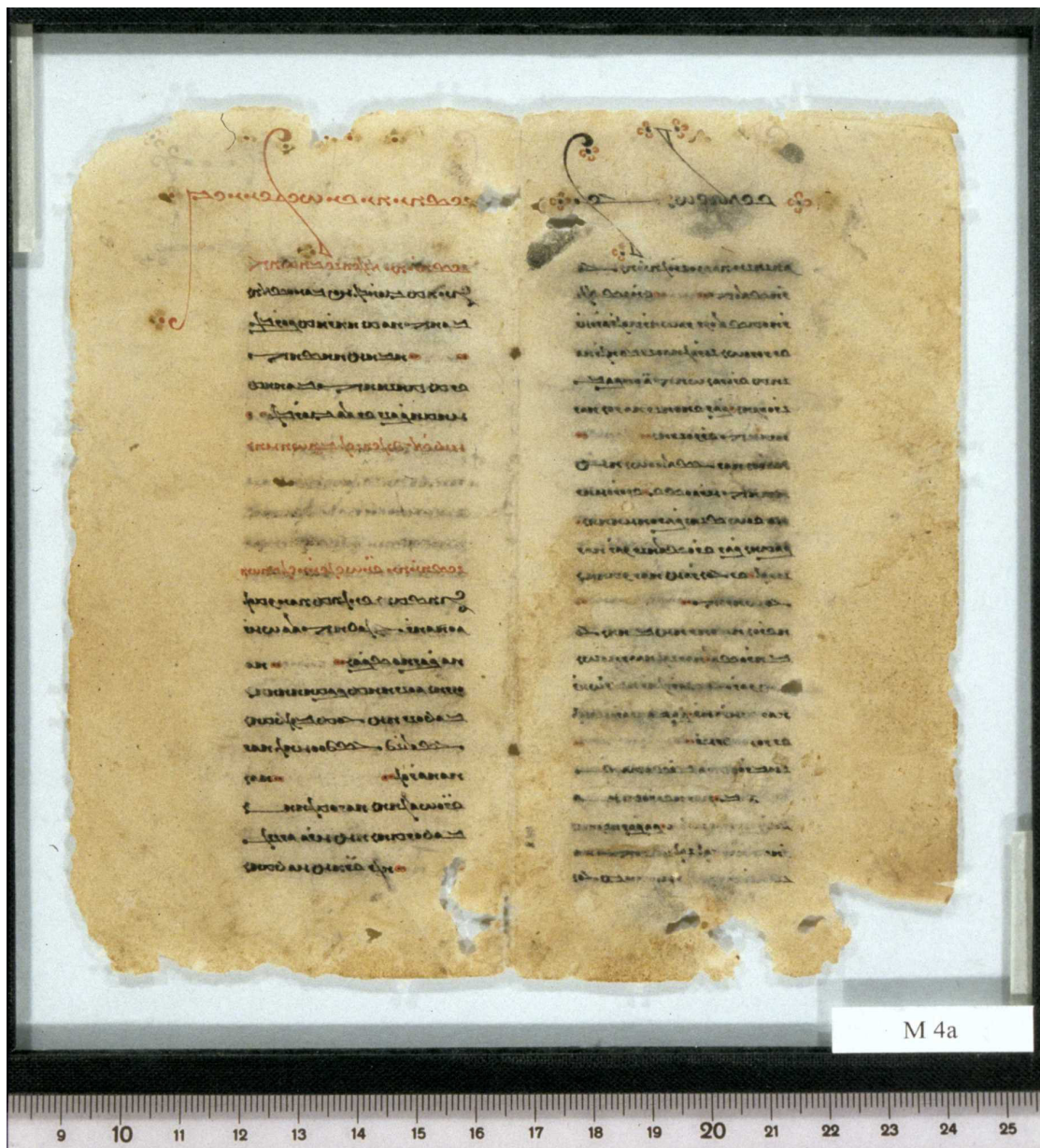


# Manichaean texts

M 482/ Šābuhragān Middle Persian  
and M 172/ Middle Persian, Sogdian  
and Old Turkish



# A Manichaean bifolio



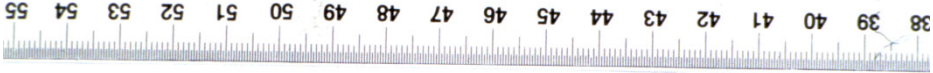
Hymns in Parthian

Ch/So 13399a

T II D

Handwritten Sogdian script on a fragment of aged, yellowed paper. The text is arranged in approximately 15 horizontal lines, with some lines containing multiple words. The script is a cursive form of the Sogdian alphabet. The paper fragment is mounted on a white background, and a ruler is visible on the left side, indicating the fragment's size (approximately 28 cm high and 10 cm wide).

# Sogdian in Sogdian script



# Sogdian in Syriac script

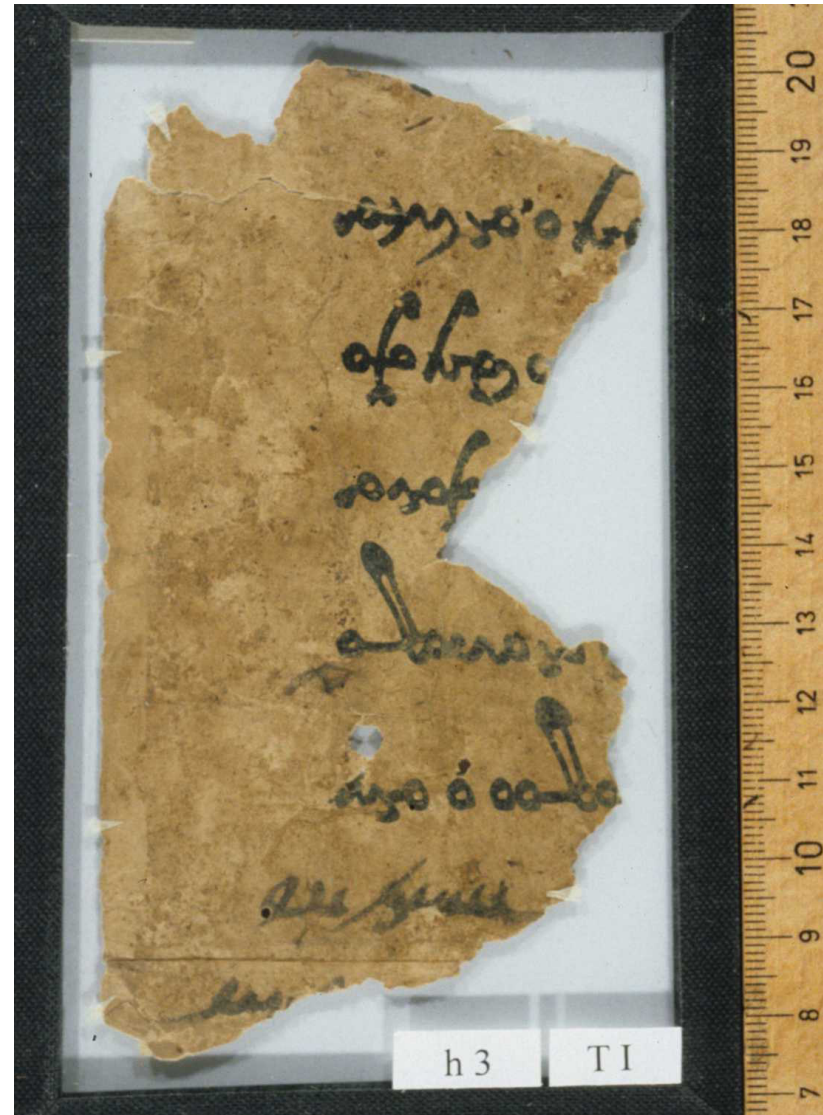
Fragment of a manuscript containing Sogdian text written in Syriac script. The text is arranged in approximately 20 horizontal lines on a piece of aged, yellowish paper. The script is a cursive form of Syriac, used to represent Sogdian words. The fragment is irregularly shaped with torn edges, particularly on the left and bottom sides. The text is dense and difficult to decipher without a key, but it appears to be a continuous passage of prose or poetry.



# Syriac in Syriac script



# Bactrian in Manichaean and in Greek script



# A Mongolian document



# Book cultures

The surviving fragments belong to book cultures of religious communities – Buddhists, Christians and Manichaeans – and demonstrate the east-west and north-south connections of Central Asia along the Silk Road: Here Chinese and Indian, Iranian, Altai and local influences meet. Additionally, some contracts and legal documents survive, allowing us to see legal cultures, again at the crossroads of influences from all directions.

The proximity to China means that paper is the primary writing material. Pens or brushes were used to write the various scripts onto scrolls or books – Indian loose-page books or codices from Iran and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The fragmentary nature of the material means that not just textual information but also any additional information on the physical composition of the paper and inks is very welcome.

# Digitisation of the Berlin Turfan Collection

The digitisation of the Berlin Turfan collection of texts was completed in 2012. This was the result of more than 15 years of work in close cooperation with the restoration and reprography departments of the State Library Berlin, for which we are extremely grateful. Thankfully, the work was funded by the German Research Board (DFG).

The first part of the digitisation is presented in a spread-sheet manner on the server of the Academy; the second part (since 2005) is presented in IDP-Berlin, the server which the Academy/Turfan Study group maintains.

# First phase



**Turfanforschung**  
Digitales Turfan-Archiv

Gefördert durch die:



Mit Unterstützung der:



[Zurück zur Turfan-Startseite](#)

- bi MITTELIRANISCHE TEXTE IN BRÄHMĪ-SCHRIFT
- bs SOGHDISCHE TEXTE IN BRÄHMĪ-SCHRIFT
- Ch/U CHINESISCH-UIGURISCHE TEXTE
- h BAKTRISCHE TEXTE IN HEPHTHAL. SCHRIFT
- KS KHOTANSAKISCHE TEXTE
- M TEXTE IN MANICHÄISCHER SCHRIFT
- Mainz MAINZ-SIGNATUREN
- MongHT MONGOLISCHE TEXTE
- n CHRISTLICH-SOGHDISCHE TEXTE IN NESTORIANISCHER SCHRIFT
- np NEUPERSISCHER TEXT IN ARABISCHER SCHRIFT
- Ps MITTELPERSISCHER PSALTER
- So, Ch/So TEXTE IN SOGHDISCHER SCHRIFT
- TS TUMSHUKSAKISCHE TEXTE
- U UIGURISCHE TEXTE



# IDP-Berlin

**IDP**  
INTERNATIONAL  
DUNHUANG  
PROJECT  
國際敦煌項目

HOME  
ÜBER IDP  
SAMMLUNGEN  
BILDUNGSARBEIT  
TECHNISCHE DETAILS  
ARCHIVE  
SITE MAP  
HILFE  
KONTAKT

**IDP DATENBANK**

IDP DATENBANKSUCHE

Suchbegriff eingeben

GO

ERWEITERTE SUCHE  
BIBLIOGRAPHISCHE SUCHE  
SUCHTIPPS

KATALOGE ANZEIGEN  
KARTEN ANZEIGEN

**MEINEM IDP**

NUTZERNAME

PASSWORT

EINLOGGEN  
REGISTRIERUNG

**SUPPORT IDP**

EIN SUTRA FÖRDERN  
SPENDEN







WZ HTML

IDP DATABASE : SEARCH RESULTS | ADVANCED SEARCH | BIBLIOGRAPHY SEARCH | M...

### Search Results

Results of Search for: Advanced search in Institute  
Items found: 34  
Displaying Items: 1 to 10

1 2 3 4 Next Ten Results >

	<p>BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN: Ch 1 Site: Karakhoja (T II D 119) Language(s)/Script(s): Chinese Materials: ink on paper</p>
	<p>BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN: Ch 3 Site: Site not known ([none]) Language(s)/Script(s): Chinese Materials: ink on paper</p>
	<p>BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN: Ch 4 Site: Site not known ([none]) Language(s)/Script(s): Chinese Materials: ink on paper</p>
	<p>BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN: Ch 5 Site: Toyuk (T III T 375) Language(s)/Script(s): Chinese Materials: ink on paper</p>
	<p>BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN: Ch 6a Site: Karakhoja (T II D 235) Language(s)/Script(s): Chinese Materials: ink on paper</p>
	<p>BERLIN-BRANDENBURGISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN: Ch 7 Site: Toyuk (T II 3076) Language(s)/Script(s): Chinese Materials: ink on paper</p>

< BACK TO SEARCH RESULTS IDP DATABASE : ITEM OVERVIEW

< PREVIOUS ITEM NEXT ITEM >

Ch 4

PHYSICAL INFO

Institute & BERLIN-  
Copyright: BRANDENBURGISCHE  
AKADEMIE DER  
WISSENSCHAFTEN

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([none])

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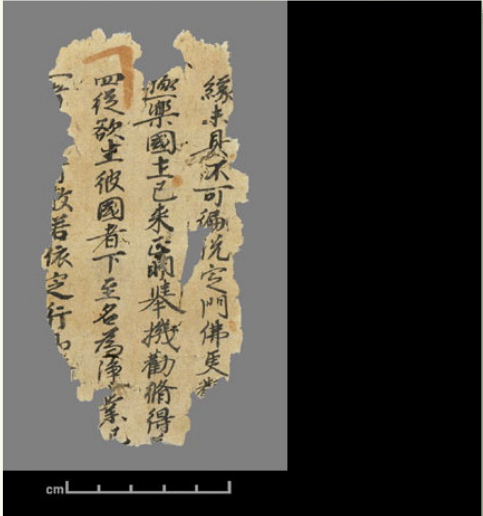
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Size (h x w) cm: 13 x 6,8

CATALOGUES  
TRANSLATIONS  
BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ROTATE IMAGE | LARGE IMAGE | STITCHED IMAGE



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# Philology

The main task of the Turfan Study group (Turfanforschung) in the Academy is the edition of the Old Turkish and the Middle Iranian fragments in the Turfan Collection.

We do this successively in our own book series 'Berliner Turfantexte'.



# Cataloguing

Together with the group working on the editions, a second group works on cataloguing the Old Turkish and Sogdian fragments in the Turfan Collection as part of the Union Catalogue of Manuscripts in Germany (KOHD), a project of the Academy of Sciences in Göttingen.

This group publishes their work within the series Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland (VOHD).

# Other activities

The two groups in Berlin take care of visitors and generally coordinate work on all parts of the collection. As with the State Library Berlin, we also coordinate with other institutions such as the Museum in Berlin and the Museum in Turfan, China.

We work with the State Library, the Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung (BAM) and the University of Hamburg on the current project on the study of red and black pigments in the ink on selected fragments in the Berlin Collection and on Chinese paper in the collection for the contribution it is making to the study of the book cultures of the Silk Road.

Thank you  
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